

Canvassing straight from heart

Give me a break. That's what many people were candidly saying or maybe thinking as I trekked from house to house along two Stouffville streets last week.

The purpose of my door-to-door campaign was not to drum up support for a Ward 4 candidacy in the 2014 municipal elections.

No, nothing that ludicrous.

I was merely seeking donations for the Heart and Stroke Foundation, a mission of mercy in which I've been privileged to participate for more than 25 years. This canvass takes place annually across York Region, including Whitchurch-Stouffville, during the month of February.

Both Jean and I are usually assigned adjoining routes. This year, however, a mix-up occurred. I received two streets while Jean had only one.

To complicate matters further, I waited until the 11th hour to begin, not a good thing with so many additional households on my call list.

Still, even with a little extra legwork, I considered it an honour, even a duty, to fulfill this obligation.

For it's due to the miracle of modern medicine and follow-up heart bypass surgery that I currently enjoy a lifestyle free from pain, a problem I endured nearly two decades.

Encouraged by this, plus the fact our second eldest son died as the result of a stroke two years ago, gives Jean and I added incentive to play a part, be it a small part, in this meaningful venture.

However, for a multitude of



Roaming Around

with Jim Thomas

reasons, all folks don't share my enthusiasm.

While polite in their greetings, most left no doubts as to current changes in attitudes when it comes to handing out hard-earned dollars to a stranger bearing a pen, receipt book and an irrelevant red badge on the collar of his coat.

I returned home satisfied. At the same time, I understood or tried to understand the reasons for donor reluctance.

In previous years, the negative response was usually "sorry, but my wife gives at the office." And this, for me, was rationale enough.

But, on one of the darkest and dreariest nights of the winter, I heard responses not tempered by compassion.

"We don't give at the door," said one. "If we wish to donate,

we'll send it by mail."

"Times are tough," said another. "We have no money to spare."

"Every time I turn around, someone has their hand out. Give me a break," said yet another.

Of 23 people contacted, only five contributed. And they did so generously, giving \$135 to be exact.

I returned home satisfied. At the same time, I understood or tried to understand the reasons for donor reluctance.

I concluded the following:

- No. 1, February is municipal tax month. This takes a sizeable chunk from everyone's purse or pocket.

- No. 2, April is more of the same, plus income tax payments to boot. A double whammy to be sure.

But there's more. Hardly a day goes by that charity appeals aren't received, some by mail, others by phone. The Heart and Stroke Foundation is equally guilty of this practice.

Requests for funds don't end in February, but continue all year round. As one homeowner put it: "Every time I turn around, someone has their hand out."

But mortal statistics are astounding. In 2012, more than 16,000 Canadians died as a result of heart failure.

However, thanks to financial support, including the February campaign, heart attack deaths are decreasing.

Reason enough for the canvass to continue and reason enough for me to continue canvassing.

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.

Straight talk from our controversial roundabouts

Ill be the roundabout
The words will make you
out an' out
You spend the day your
way

Call it morning driving
Through the south
In an' out the valley

Roundabout, Yes

Just like Mayor Wayne Emmerson, I love the roundabout. And not just 1970s' classic rock standard.

There it is.

Print it on a T-shirt, a bumper sticker or a sign in the middle of one of the congestion-fighting circles.

Please add the disclaimer: "when used properly".

The phrase is a lot like "don't try making your own fireworks or tequila" or "consult a physician if you break out in lime green hives, stop breathing or become pregnant".

It's understood - unlike the much-maligned roundabout.

Much to the chagrin of some members of town council, we had many a letter - a little more than a year ago over their proposed 40-per-cent pay hikes.

The proposed roundabout at Hwy. 48 and Bloomington Road reporter Sandra Bolan wrote about in last Thursday's Sun-Tribune is drawing similar traffic, positive and negative.

(There's a sampling on page 7 today. See Saturday's paper for more)

Aside from being scared by Rome's crazy driving circles and somehow navigating a massive one in Florida, I had little roundabout experience until they arrived in Stouffville



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

earlier this century.

There was little warning, in the way of printed instructions or explanatory signage.

Without spoiling the ending of many of the letters, that may explain the frustration drivers are having with our roundabouts - many don't know how to use them.

To quote that great American philosopher, Ted Nugent: "It's a free-for-all".

That may also explain the glass and metal bits sometimes left in the roundabouts of my neighborhood.

I felt similarly unprepared on the streets of Toronto after moving from Northwestern Ontario, where there are no streetcars or lit crosswalks to yield to.

Roundabouts have made sense in many centres for centuries. They improve traffic flow and decrease collisions.

In Whitchurch-Stouffville, many drivers aren't getting that.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune



DANIER

OUTLET

4 DAYS LEFT!

TAKE UP TO AN EXTRA 40% OFF

ALREADY REDUCED PRICES ON FALL WINTER STYLES*

*valid at Danier outlets only. Excludes mall locations. See danier.com for outlet locations and details.

